



The Subject and the Syllogism

“The Notion is the principle of freedom, the power of substance self-realised. It is a systematic whole, in which each of its constituent functions is the very total which the notion is, and is put as indissolubly one with it. Thus in its self-identity it has original and complete determinateness.

*“The onward movement of the notion is no longer either a transition into, or a reflection on something else, but **Development**. For in the notion, the elements distinguished are without more ado at the same time declared to be identical with one another and with the whole, and the specific character of each is a free being of the whole notion.”* (The Shorter Logic, The Notion §160-1)

Lenin in “The State and Revolution” writes about the **true theory of development**. He is referring to the dialectical logic of Hegel. This is not the theory of “service delivery”, or of the “developmental state”. It is the theory of how humans, taken all together, became what they now are, and how they continue to develop as humanity as a whole, into the future.

What are we getting from our studies of Hegel? One thing we are getting is a theory of development that can help us to make sense of “developmental” state, which is otherwise little more than a “buzz word” in our times.

So, for example, in the quotation above we may substitute the word “**nation**” for the word “**notion**”, and it makes sense, and is compatible with Karl Marx and Frederick Engels’ statement in the Communist Manifesto that “the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all”.

We have also noted that Karl Marx used Hegel’s ways and means to work out what became “Capital”, the most influential book in history.

We have got pointers or signposts which will help us as we continue to read, study and discuss.

Do we all need to fully master Hegel at once? No, but as a Party we do need a significant number of communists who have mastered Hegel. The knowledge of Hegel needs to be kept alive by a virtual collective of communist scholars.

The rest of us need to be constantly moving towards a better understanding of Hegel. We need at least to have an appreciation of why we have to have some understanding of Hegel if we are properly to understand Marx; and in this course we have probably achieved that much, at least, by now. We need to appreciate that for the Party, Hegel is indispensable, and not a disposable option. That is why this ten-part course on Hegel is one of the sixteen Communist University Generic Courses and must remain so.

The Subject

The downloadable study text for this instalment (see below) is Andy Blunden's seventh lecture, on The Subject in Hegel's *Logic*.

What is "The Subject"? In philosophy in general, the fundamental question is the relationship between human Subject and the material Objective universe. Simply put, life is a dialectical unity-and-struggle-of-opposites between Subject and Object, where the one cannot exist without the other. Paulo Freire is eloquent about this, notably at the end of [Chapter One of "The Pedagogy of the Oppressed,"](#) where he writes, among other things:

"A revolutionary leadership must accordingly practice co-intentional education. Teachers and students (leadership and people), co-intent on reality, are both Subjects, not only in the task of unveiling that reality and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-

creating that knowledge. As they attain this knowledge of reality through common reflection and action, they discover themselves as its permanent re-creators. In this way, the presence of the oppressed in the struggle for their liberation will be what it should be: not pseudo-participation, but committed involvement."

and

"To deny the importance of subjectivity in the process of transforming the world and history is naive and simplistic. It is to admit the impossible: a world without people. This objectivistic position is as ingenuous as that of subjectivism, which postulates people without a world. World and human beings do not exist apart from each other, they exist in constant interaction. Marx does not espouse such a dichotomy; nor does any other critical, realistic thinker. What Marx criticized and scientifically destroyed was not subjectivity, but subjectivism and psychologism. Just as objective social reality exists not by chance, but as the product of human action, so it is not transformed by chance. If humankind produce social reality (which in the "inversion of the praxis" turns back upon them and conditions them), then transforming that reality is an historical task, a task for humanity."

The first page of Andy Blunden's lecture gives depth to this basic understanding of The Subject and then introduces a Hegelian elaboration of The Subject. This may typify the

difficulty of Hegel: Just when you thought that you had secured yourself to a firm philosophical rock, Hegel seems to be taking a hammer to it and setting you adrift again. Please do not fear: nothing is going to be lost.

Nor are we in the realm of mysteries. On the contrary, what we find is that Hegel is providing ways to think about quite familiar things, which may not have been in the realm of philosophy before, like The Judgement of Solomon, the Declaration of Independence, the Magna Carta, and we can add, the South African **Freedom Charter**. Hegel is making a theory of how these determined movements forward can and do, in Hegel's words, "*emerge out of the throng of disputation*".

Hegelian philosophy, as obscure as it may seem, turns out to be the only philosophy that can help us with the actual political life we lead.

Almost at the end of this lecture Andy Blunden says:

"...the notions, judgments and syllogisms of the section on Subjectivity, render themselves as typical of the forms of consciousness encountered within such formal organisations. Lenin's insistence in 1901 that to be a member of the Party an individual had to participate in one of the Party's branches or activities is rational in this light." (Read it! This is one occasion when the introduction will not suffice without the reading of the actual text.)

Earlier, Andy had written:

“[Hegel’s] Doctrine of the Notion is made up of Subject, Object and Idea. The Idea is the unity of Subject and Object, the process in which the objectification or institutionalization of the Subject continues to drive the development of the active and living subject. This development of the Subject itself, the inner development of the subject which continues within and alongside its objectification, has the form of the movement towards an all-round developed relation between individual, universal and particular.”

So we can note that there is a connection between Notion, Subject and Object, and then that the development of the Subject involves the *individual, universal and particular*, which three are soon reduced to “I”, “U” and “P”; and all this moves towards an articulation of socio-political behaviour which is practically useful to the point of being indispensable.

Syllogisms

Andy Blunden goes into the question of Hegel’s specific “syllogisms” very carefully, so we can simply recommend that reading. But what is a “syllogism” as such? And what is different about Hegel’s syllogisms, as compared to other ones?

One difference is that Hegel’s syllogisms are all made up of

one each of “I”, “U” and “P”; Individual, Universal and Particular. Andy Blunden shows very well what that means.

But syllogisms in general are also typically like the “Socrates” syllogism (*"All men are mortal. Socrates is a man. Therefore, Socrates is mortal."*) - a tight, undoubtedly true series of two premises and a conclusion, where because the premises are true, therefore the conclusion must also be true.

There are other syllogisms where the conclusion does not necessarily fully “follow” from the premises. Such a syllogism may appear to be a “*non sequitur*” (Latin for “does not follow”), or at least as a possible “*non sequitur*”. Andy Blunden gives several examples of such “deficient” syllogisms in his lecture.

Are such half-true syllogisms any use? Yes! Hegel has found a way to make use of them, and this way of Hegel’s works because of the distinction between Individual, Universal and Particular.

It is a bit like “approximation” in mathematics. When the student first comes across it, approximation appears to violate and betray everything that was hitherto taught about truth and certainty. But when approximation is done scientifically, it creates a degree of certainty out of uncertainty that cannot be got in any other way.

So it is with Hegel’s syllogisms.

We are now getting very close to the precise reference for Lenin's remark that: *"It is impossible completely to understand Marx's Capital, and especially its first chapter, without having thoroughly studied and understood the whole of Hegel's Logic."* It should not be too difficult to find in Marx's Capital a lot of syllogisms of the Hegel type, which are only understandable in the Hegel way.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [The Subject - Universal, Particular and Individual, 2007, Blunden.](#)
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